



**International Convention on  
the Elimination  
of all Forms of  
Racial Discrimination**

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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Fifty-first session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 1215th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,  
on Monday, 4 August 1997, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. BANTON

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GE.97-17650 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

OPENING OF THE SESSION

1. The CHAIRMAN declared open the fifty-first session of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (provisional agenda item 1) (CERD/C/324)

2. The CHAIRMAN said that if there were no objections he would take it that the Committee wished to adopt the provisional agenda as contained in document CERD/C/324. Any objections to the annotations could be dealt with under the specific agenda item.
3. The agenda was adopted.
4. Mr. RECHETOV said that the Committee was starting its work at the same time as the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, whose work had already been reported on in the press. By contrast, the Committee received no publicity at all until the Chairman's press conference at the end of its session, and perhaps the time had come to change that situation. If more information, relating, for example, to the inter-sessional work and the Committee's new procedures and decisions were included in its main document, CERD/C/324, its work would be focused more on its primary goals and would become better known to the public at large and attract the attention of the press and the major champions of human rights. It might, for instance, spend some time discussing more persuasive ways of inducing countries to submit their reports, while maintaining its impartiality. Many States parties, including members of the former Soviet Union, neither submitted reports nor sent representatives to the Committee, despite sending large delegations to the Sub-Commission. If such States, one of which in particular came to mind, were to send a report and representatives to the Committee, they would no doubt be able to convince the Committee that the situation regarding national minorities in that country was perfectly satisfactory, or at least that measures were being taken to improve the situation. The fact that such States failed to cooperate with the Committee prevented it from properly fulfilling its basic mandate.
5. Mr. ABOUL-NASR requested that some time be given to discussing the Committee's concluding observations and ways in which the drafting might be improved. It should be made clearer, for example, which opinions were expressed by the Country Rapporteur on the basis of information personally obtained, and which were the views of the Committee. It should also be made clear when one or more Committee members failed to agree with the others.
6. The CHAIRMAN said that the points raised by Mr. Rechetov and Mr. Aboul-Nasr would best be discussed under agenda item 3.

REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN (agenda item 2)

7. The CHAIRMAN said that his report, circulated under the symbol CERD/C/51/Misc.6) covered his meeting with NGOs, the programme of work for the fifty-first session and correspondence, to which should be added a letter

received from Mrs. Partsch, thanking the Committee for its message. At the NGO meeting in March 1997 there had been a proposal that NGOs should have an audience with the Committee as it did with the Committee on the Rights of the Child. He had conveyed the Committee's views on its relations with NGOs, its timetable pressures and its desire for written information from NGOs, and had proposed a further meeting towards the end of the current session. NGOs had requested that they be informed in good time of reports to be taken up and any timetable changes.

8. The unedited version of the report of the Independent Expert on the effective functioning of human rights treaty bodies (E/CN.4/1997/74), which had been circulated to members, would be considered under a separate agenda item. He had been informed that the Committee's proposals on studies by the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities would be discussed by the Sub-Commission under agenda item 3.

9. The Committee took note of the report of the Chairman.

ORGANIZATIONAL AND OTHER MATTERS (agenda item 3)

10. Mr. HUSBANDS (Acting Secretary) informed the Committee that Switzerland had asked for a postponement until the fifty-second session in March 1998, and the Philippines, for which Mr. Garvalov was Country Rapporteur, had been scheduled in its place.

11. All reporting States had confirmed their participation in the fifty-first session apart from Cambodia, whose Mission in Paris had neither replied to letters nor requested postponement. The Committee would therefore have to decide whether its report should be considered in the absence of a delegation, or postponed.

12. Among the list of review countries, Cuba, Lebanon and Yugoslavia had filed reports with the Committee and should, in accordance with normal practice, be withdrawn from the review procedure.

13. He drew attention to Norway's brief updating report which had been received on 20 June 1997 and had not been sent out because of the time needed for processing and translation.

14. Members who had not yet responded to the Chairman's questionnaire regarding the report of the Independent Expert, Mr. Philip Alston, were encouraged to return their questionnaires to provide a better idea of the views of the Committee as a whole.

15. Mr. Ferrero Costa would be absent during the fifty-first session, having been nominated Foreign Minister of Peru, and Mr. de Gouttes had taken his place as Country Rapporteur for Argentina.

16. A new High Commissioner for Human Rights had been named; the Committee would be given further information the following day when Mr. Zacklin, Officer-in-Charge, High Commissioner/Centre for Human Rights, would address the Committee.

17. Two Danish NGOs had invited interested Committee members to a briefing on Wednesday, 6 August, prior to consideration of the Danish report, and had submitted documentation. Representatives of a Norwegian NGO had also submitted documentation and would brief interested Committee members on Thursday, 14 August, prior to the consideration of Norway's periodic report.

18. The Republic of Cyprus had ratified the amendment to article 8 of the Convention.

19. Mr. SHERIFIS said that the report of the Independent Expert, Mr. Philip Alston, sent by fax, had unfortunately been illegible. His response to the Chairman's questionnaire would be submitted shortly.

20. He welcomed the news of Mr. Ferrero Costa's nomination as Foreign Minister of Peru and hoped that the Chairman would write and congratulate him on behalf of the Committee.

21. The points raised by Mr. Rechetov were important and merited discussion. The Convention itself made it clear that the Committee's purposes should be disseminated to the extent possible and the Committee should therefore consider how best to achieve that purpose, bearing in mind that informing the public at large of the Committee's work was one way of achieving implementation of the Convention. The points raised by Mr. Aboul-Nasr also warranted discussion.

22. The CHAIRMAN said that he took it that the Committee would like him to write to Mr. Ferrero Costa in the terms suggested.

23. On the question of Cambodia, he suggested that the Committee should take no action until Mr. Yutzis, Country Rapporteur for Cambodia, could advise the Committee whether or not the report should be considered in absentia.

24. Mr. WOLFRUM endorsed the comment made by Mr. Sherifis with regard to Mr. Alston's report and recommended that time be set aside to discuss it fully at the present session. The questionnaire would throw no light on members' views of the report, which tackled very important issues that could have some bearing on the future of the Convention and even of the Committee itself.

25. Mr. Ferrero Costa had, by telephone, sent his best regards to all members of the Committee, had expressed regret at being unable to attend its fifty-first session, but had promised to participate in its spring 1998 session, regardless of his other duties.

26. Some of the points made by Mr. Rechetov had been raised during the Committee's discussion on the extent to which successor States were obliged to accept human rights agreements which had previously been valid for part or parts of their populations. He fully endorsed Mr. Rechetov's views and would comment at greater length at the appropriate time.

27. The CHAIRMAN said that he intended to set aside time on the last Friday morning of the session to discuss the Committee's response to Mr. Alston's report. The questionnaire was not intended as an alternative to a Committee discussion but to identify a general trend of opinion and promote discussion.

28. Mr. AHMADU said that before writing to congratulate Mr. Ferrero Costa, the Committee should be satisfied that the appointment processes had been completed.

29. The points raised by Mr. Rechetov were important and should be discussed before the last day of the session.

30. Mr. GARVALOV asked what action was to be taken in connection with the three States parties due to be considered under the review procedure but which had since filed reports. As Country Rapporteur for Lebanon, his preference would be to postpone discussion of Lebanon's report to the next session as he had not yet seen it.

31. He fully agreed with the points raised by Mr. Rechetov and Mr. Aboul Nasr and hoped that time could be found to discuss them at the present session.

32. The status of Mr. Alston's report was still unclear and he wondered whether it had been submitted formally to the Commission on Human Rights for consideration at its next session and forwarding to the General Assembly. The report contained fundamental proposals which could have repercussions on the treaty bodies in the twenty-first century, including proposals that they should be replaced by one or two larger bodies. Other parts of the report, including a comment that the treaty bodies had not yet discussed the report, also merited debate. Why Mr. Alston had not approached the treaty bodies could be discussed at a later stage. The report should in any event be considered before the scheduled date to give the Committee time to decide on its response.

33. Mr. HUSBANDS (Acting Secretary) said that approximately two months were required to edit the reports of States parties and translate them into the Committee's working languages. The Committee might therefore wish to conduct an abbreviated review lasting up to an hour of the reports of Cuba, Lebanon and Yugoslavia, or it could postpone them to the next session.

34. Mr. GARVALOV, supported by Mr. SHERIFIS, proposed that Lebanon's report be deferred until the next session.

35. Mr. van BOVEN asked whether, in view of Mr. Ferrero Costa's intention to attend the Committee's next session, the Committee could take it that article 8, paragraph 5 (b) of the Convention did not yet apply.

36. He, too, had received an illegible copy of Mr. Alston's report. Rather than discussing points in isolation, it would be more useful to consider them in the context of the overall report, which should be discussed before 19 August.

37. As Country Rapporteur for Cuba, he proposed that the Cuban report and that of Yugoslavia should, like Lebanon's, be deferred to the next session to allow time for proper processing.

38. The CHAIRMAN said that article 8, paragraph 5 (b) of the Convention was not applicable in Mr. Ferrero Costa's case, although it might become so in the future.

39. The Committee had expressed the desire to discuss Mr. Alston's report (E/CN.4/1997/74) earlier in the session than currently scheduled. If the country rapporteurs for Cuba, Lebanon and Yugoslavia agreed that the reports of those countries should be postponed until the next session, the time saved could be used for the consideration of Mr. Alston's report.

40. Mr. de GOUTTES congratulated Mr. Ferrero Costa on his advancement and declared himself ready to take over as Country Rapporteur for Argentina. Article 8 of the Convention did not apply to Mr. Ferrero Costa since he had not officially resigned as a member of the Committee and, indeed, apparently hoped to attend the next session.

41. In respect of Mr. Alston's report, he shared Mr. Garvalov's doubts about the formal status and scope of the report, since it had been prepared by an independent expert rather than an official United Nations body.

42. Any changes to the proposed timetable should be announced in good time to enable members to prepare the points they wished to raise.

43. Mr. RECHETOV said that Mr. Alston's report raised grave issues which might actually call the existence of the Committee into question. The Committee could easily spend half the session discussing its implications, and he therefore considered that the original date in the third week of the session should be retained in order to prevent the matter intruding upon more important business.

44. Mr. SHERIFIS pointed out that Mr. Ferrero Costa's case was not without precedent: to his knowledge, two experts had served as members of the Committee while also holding ministerial office in their own countries.

45. Mr. WOLFRUM said that the report of Yugoslavia contained a great deal of interesting material which the Committee would need to study in detail, and was therefore in favour of postponing consideration of the report until the next session.

46. Mr. YUTZIS agreed that the reports of Cuba, Lebanon and Yugoslavia should be postponed until the next session of the Committee.

47. Speaking as Country Rapporteur for Cambodia, he said that the situation in that country, and indeed in the region as a whole, was extremely complex. It was not clear to which authority the Committee should address its comments, or whether there was any likelihood of action being taken. There was no point in considering the situation in Cambodia under such circumstances, and he therefore suggested that it should be postponed.

48. Mr. SHAHI said that, although the situation in Cambodia was certainly complicated, there did exist a de facto authority which appeared to be in control of the country, and it would do no harm for the Committee to remind that authority of its commitments under the Convention. However, he would

defer to the opinion of the Country Rapporteur. A similar situation had prevailed some years before in Afghanistan: what had the Committee done then?

49. Mr. van BOVEN said that a complicated situation prevailed in many countries, including those due for consideration under the early warning procedure. In the case of Cambodia, since the Committee had actually received a report, it should consider it even in the absence of the Cambodian delegation. He suggested that yet another reminder should be sent to the Cambodian Embassy in Paris.

50. Mr. CHIGOVERA asked whether the Committee wished to postpone its consideration of the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly Zaire), which had been scheduled under the early warning and urgent procedures (agenda item 4). The situation in that country was changing constantly and dramatically, and he considered that it should be allowed to settle down before any information was requested, particularly since there had been no actual reports of violations of the Convention.

51. Mr. WOLFRUM, speaking as Country Rapporteur for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, said that there had been reports of disappearances, although their reliability was unproven. However, a mission had been set up to investigate allegations of human rights violations before and during the civil war. He suggested that the Committee should gather together all available information on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, both from within the United Nations and from outside, and discuss the situation in the third week of the session, as scheduled.

52. Mr. DIACONU saw the current conflict in Cambodia as a fight for power with no ethnic element. It was not appropriate, therefore, for the Committee to consider that country under its early warning and urgent procedures, although other human rights bodies might choose to do so.

53. Mr. AHMADU noted that the situation of Liberia was due for review because its initial report was excessively overdue. Perhaps, however, the Committee should make allowances in view of the recent accession of a new President who had undertaken to fulfil the country's obligations under international human rights instruments.

54. He did not think that the situation in Cambodia should be discussed under the Committee's early warning and urgent procedures. Since Cambodia had actually submitted a report, it should be discussed in the ordinary way.

55. Mr. GARVALOV said that it was important to distinguish between the early warning and urgent procedures, under which the situation in a country should be discussed even if no information was forthcoming from the Government concerned, and the procedure concerning overdue reports. In the latter case, it was justifiable to defer consideration of a report which had only just been received. If, on the other hand, no report at all was forthcoming, then the case should be discussed in the light of other information available, in accordance with the established procedure.

56. Mr. WOLFRUM said that the new President of Liberia had included foreign observers in the committee investigating human rights violations, and had

talked encouragingly about fulfilling his country's international human rights commitments. He therefore considered that Liberia's case should be deferred until the new Government had had a chance to submit the overdue reports. The situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo was different, and he felt that it should be discussed in detail.

57. Mr. YUTZIS, speaking as Country Rapporteur for Cambodia, said that it was not clear whether the de facto Government in Cambodia would be able to keep its hold on power. In some parts of the country it was impossible to say which of the various factions could be expected to implement the law. Since it was not clear to whom the Committee should be addressing its comments, it would be better to defer consideration of the situation in Cambodia.

58. The CHAIRMAN invited the Committee to continue its consideration of the best way of publicizing its activities, a point raised by Mr. Rechetov.

59. Mr. RECHETOV said that the best possible boost to the Committee's work would be for every State party to submit its reports in good time. Were reminders still sent to States parties whose reports were overdue?

60. Mr. HUSBANDS (Acting Secretary) said that reminders were sent every November to all States parties whose reports were overdue - a measure which had proved quite effective.

61. Mr. WOLFRUM said that it was even more important to encourage States which had not yet done so to ratify the Convention. Mr. Alston's report suggested a number of ways of doing so, but he was not convinced by them. It was also important to distinguish between States which had never ratified the Convention and newly independent States which had previously been covered by the provisions of the Convention, but had failed to ratify it on becoming independent. It seemed likely that the number of people living under the protection of the Convention had declined, for exactly that reason.

62. The CHAIRMAN said that the Secretariat document on the situation of successor States should be updated and reissued.

63. Mr. ABOUL-NASR said that the United Nations Information Centre in Cairo apparently did not have even one copy of the Convention. Many of the Committee's problems concerned communication with countries without representation in Geneva. He had made three suggestions in that regard: the Committee could meet in New York to discuss only those States parties without representation in Geneva; the Committee could arrange for meetings in the field with the regional organizations of the United Nations to discuss regional problems concerning the Convention, in public; and the Committee could contact regional human rights organizations to exchange views and establish a dialogue. That was in addition to a closer exchange of views with NGOs in the field, with a view to publicizing issues of racial discrimination jointly.

64. Mr. de GOUTTES said that Mr. Wolfrum's remarks on why there had not been more ratifications of the Convention in recent years raised a serious issue, not just of publicity, but also of substance. There were both legal problems, such as the succession of States, and political ones. Possibly the increase

in ethnic, racial and immigration problems was causing certain States to adopt a more prudent attitude towards certain provisions of the Convention. If that were so, the reasons for that situation must be ascertained. Thought should also be given to the reasons for States parties' reservations and to some States' reluctance to implement specific provisions of the Convention.

65. Mr. SHERIFIS agreed with Mr. Wolfrum that it was important to encourage new ratifications. The Committee needed to examine what it could do at the national level to encourage publicity about its work and the substance of the Convention. States parties were asked to inform the Committee of their publicity, but very little was being done, and the issue needed more emphasis. At the international level, the Committee had asked the Department of Public Information for assistance.

66. Regarding States parties' reporting obligations, the Committee had decided to request a comprehensive report every four years and an updating report every two years, but the message did not seem to have been properly received. He agreed with Mr. Aboul-Nasr on the merits of holding meetings in New York, but the financial implications had put paid to that idea in the past. That argument could no longer be pressed, however, since the Committee could now look forward to a new situation with, in particular, the amendments to article 8, paragraph 6, of the Convention. That being said, the amendments, though adopted by the General Assembly, had not yet entered into force since an insufficient number of States parties had so far accepted them, and that would take several more years. If it were only a small number of States parties whose financial problems prevented them from sending large delegations to Geneva, perhaps some financial sacrifice could be made in order to allow them to attend. It was a good idea to hold occasional meetings of the Committee in the regions, but if the Committee could not even agree to meet in New York once in a while, how could it go to the regions? There would be no problem if the United Nations regional offices paid the Committee's expenses.

67. The system of rapporteurs liaising with other bodies was clearly not working very well, Mr. de Gouttes having been the only one to have done an excellent job in liaising between the Committee and the High Commissioner for Human Rights. His own offers to arrange for a meeting between the director of legal affairs for the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Committee had been turned down. An exchange of views was needed among Committee members as to what was advisable and feasible.

68. The CHAIRMAN said it should be noted that other human rights treaty bodies held at least one meeting a year in New York.

69. Mr. AHMADU said that publicity was non-existent in many African capitals. He had had difficulty in explaining the Committee's work to members of the press in Nigeria and had found that the United Nations Information Centre in Lagos did not even have a copy of the Convention. It was important to inform staff at the respective foreign ministries about the Committee and the Convention, and that was the responsibility of the Secretariat. Other treaty bodies were not publicized at all in certain countries. He agreed on the need for special meetings for countries without representation in either Geneva or New York. There was an African Centre for Democracy and Human

Rights Studies in the Gambia, in which members of the Organization for African Unity (OAU) participated on a rotating basis. The Committee needed a link with that body and should invite it to attend certain meetings, possibly to discuss overdue reports. It would be easier for the Centre to go to New York than to Geneva.

70. Most treaty monitoring bodies required reports every two years. The Committee should examine its own periodicity requirements, as many States parties felt that international bodies were asking for too many reports and that the Committee's report was one of the most difficult to prepare. Its reporting requirements were becoming increasingly demanding and the Committee should try to simplify them.

71. The CHAIRMAN said that delegations did not come before the Committee to defend their reports and that there was no adversarial relationship between the two.

72. Mr. YUTZIS said an in-depth analysis was needed of the possible reasons for non-ratification of the Convention and the related question of reservations. He was also concerned about the small number of countries making the declaration under article 14. The problem raised by Mr. Rechetov was not one of publicity, but rather of a communication strategy. The Committee could not afford to let its work go unnoticed, and while it was an exaggeration to say, as the Argentines did, that reality was an invention of the media, it was true that the Committee did rely substantially on the media. Although it was not possible for the Committee to have frequent meetings in the regions, it should do so once in a while, and he agreed with Mr. Aboul-Nasr that if such meetings could be part of a communication strategy the Committee would have that much greater impact.

73. Mr. ABOUL-NASR, clarifying several points he had raised earlier on concluding observations, said that in drafting the concluding observations, the Committee should comply fully with the requirement in article 9, paragraph 2, of the Convention that its report to the General Assembly should include any comments from States parties. In all fairness to States parties, they should be given the opportunity to comment on criticisms expressed in the concluding observations of which they might not be aware since they had been voiced by the Committee in closed meetings. Secondly, the Committee should not state in its concluding observations that it expressed concern or was of a particular opinion unless there had been a decision or a clear consensus to that effect, and certainly not if, for example, the Rapporteur alone or only one or two members had expressed that opinion. Thirdly, both the summary records and the concluding observations should give equal and fair attention to all opinions, rather than giving extensive coverage to the Rapporteur's opinions at the expense of other viewpoints, as was now the case. They should clearly differentiate between the views of some members and those of the Committee as a whole.

74. Mr. GARVALOV said that members should not be restricted to addressing only one or two points on a report and suggested an annual general debate to thrash out contentious issues.

75. The low accession rate might be explained partly by the fact that the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights had set universality targets only for the International Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

76. It was not for the Committee to ascertain the reason for the low accession rate, but it was up to the States parties to discuss that and other issues, including universality and compliance, at their regular meetings. What good was universality if only a few States complied with the terms of the Convention?

77. He commended the Secretariat on its work in informing the press about the work of the Committee but was disappointed at the lack of reciprocity from journalists.

78. Mr. SHAHI said the Committee could not expect to generate publicity unless it was linked to areas of interest to the international press such as the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. He suggested that the Chairman hold press conferences at least twice during each session whenever the Committee had substantive remarks to make about crisis situations.

79. He concurred that the situation in Cambodia was one of human rights violations and not racial discrimination. The Vietnamese in Cambodia continued to suffer discrimination at the hands of provincial and municipal authorities, who had been registering them as illegal aliens. Technically speaking, the Committee was entitled to make comments on the case of Cambodia, providing all members agreed to do so.

80. On the matter of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, he referred to an interview with the Vice-President of Rwanda, who had expressed disillusionment with the apathy of the international community and the Security Council. There were allegations of massacres of Hutus in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, but the President, Mr. Kabila, objected to the Secretary-General's appointment of a representative for a fact-finding mission there. Although the situation was being dealt with at the Secretariat level, it could still be reviewed by the Committee in a bid to attract the interest of the press in the work of the Committee.

81. Referring to Mr. Aboul-Nasr's suggestion about regionally held meetings, he proposed further discussion despite the Secretary-General's negative-growth budget target.

82. Members of the Committee should be free to express their views on concluding observations and recommendations made by country rapporteurs and he supported any subsequent efforts to make observations and recommendations more representative on the views of the Committee. He proposed that any "recommendations" made in the concluding observations on a report of a specific country be referred to as "suggestions" so as to avoid any confusion.

83. Mr. van BOVEN said that the Convention was no longer considered an instrument of foreign policy. States were exercising caution because of the potentially explosive domestic implications of its implementation.

84. The appointment by the Commission on Human Rights of a Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism and racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and its calls for new approaches suggested that doubt was being cast on the relevance and usefulness of the Committee's work. Some parts of the Convention, notably articles 11 to 14, were underutilised or not used at all. Some matters which might have been referred to the Committee, such as indigenous issues, were being referred to the Human Rights Committee. He wondered whether the Committee had not been sidelined even though its concerns were with mainstream issues affecting States parties.

85. He endorsed Mr. Aboul-Nasr's call for more outreach, despite budgetary constraints, and hoped the Committee could enlist the help of the new High Commissioner for Human Rights. He stressed the crucial importance of drawing on the expertise of national as well as international NGOs and urged the Committee to attend more hearings at which they were present.

86. Concluding observations were useful as monitoring tools, both for treaty bodies and States parties. He agreed that they should reflect the collective views of the Committee and that country rapporteurs should be alerted to varying points of view, which in turn should be given appropriate coverage, but underscored the expertise of the country rapporteurs and the validity of their comments. It was only natural that they should be given due credit for the time and energy they invested in their work and the reliability of their analyses. Like Mr. Aboul-Nasr, he hoped there would be further debate on ways to encourage States parties, under article 9, paragraph 2, to give their comments.

87. Mr. LECHUGA HEVIA said that, because of limited financial resources, the Committee could not expect to meet in New York in the near future, but personal contact between the Chairman, mandated by the Committee, and representatives of States parties during the General Assembly session in New York could be useful in promoting dialogue on delays in reporting.

88. He endorsed the call for further discussion at the current session on giving States an opportunity to respond to the Committee's concluding observations.

89. Mr. WOLFRUM expressed agreement with Mr. Aboul-Nasr's comments about concluding observations. They should be regarded as a tool for furthering dialogue and he would therefore actively encourage States to give their comments for submission to the General Assembly along with the Committee's observations. Such comments could then be a focus of subsequent discussion with the reporting State.

90. As to whether a vote should be taken on concluding observations, he felt that the question should be decided ad hoc. He agreed that summary records should reflect the plurality of views within the Committee and called for a narrower focus in concluding observations so that States could target their replies accordingly.

91. Mr. SHERIFIS supported the view that States parties' opinions on the concluding observations should be aired. Since the delay of States in responding to the Committee led to a breakdown in dialogue, ways should be found to enable them to reply to criticisms and recommendations.

92. The press releases should present a more balanced picture of the views of country rapporteurs, State representatives and other members of the Committee.

93. Mr. VALENCIA RODRIGUEZ endorsed the call for States' right to make comments on concluding observations and for more balanced reporting. The reference to "suggestions" and "general recommendations" in article 9, paragraph 2 was open to interpretation as referring either to all States parties or to each report submitted to the Committee. He suggested that the second interpretation should be accepted in the interest of dialogue.

94. If there was consensus, it should be reported. Likewise, if there was none, it should be reflected in the concluding observations, and a vote should be taken and duly recorded. The summary records of the meetings should moreover provide a more balanced view of all members' opinions and comments.

95. Country rapporteurs should concentrate more on the Committee's terms of reference and the Convention than on areas dealt with by other Committees.

96. Better publicity involved more than just better press releases. The international press considered the Committee's work too legalistic and technical and not conducive to extensive coverage. The Committee might consider meeting occasionally in regions generating most of the problems facing the Committee and of interest to the press, although the financial implications would need to be considered.

97. Turning to the reaction of States parties to the Committee's suggestions or requests, it should be borne in mind that there were political issues and sometimes conflicting interests involved. Perhaps the matter of States parties' responsibility could be dealt with in the draft organizational reform proposed by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly, which might recommend that States parties abide by their obligations under the Convention.

98. Mrs. ZOU Deci requested a final decision on the Committee's consideration of the report on Cambodia. The role of the Committee was to promote dialogue but, since it seemed the Government would not be able to send a representative, there would be no point to discussing the report since the key issue in Cambodia was not ethnic conflict.

99. The question of concluding observations posed problems and warranted further discussion. Opposing views should be reflected in the concluding observations. States parties should be allowed to express their views and correct an unfair situation in which members of the Committee sat as judges and States parties had no right of reply.

100. Finally, she suggested that the concluding observations should be disseminated on the Internet and thus invite reactions from the wider public.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.